

by myself, Senator SMITH, Senator BAUCUS, and Senator SANTORUM to help some of the world's poorest countries sustain vital export industries and promote economic growth and political stability.

The Tariff Relief Assistance for Developing Economies Act, TRADE, of 2005 will provide duty-free and quota-free benefits for garments and other products similar to those afforded to beneficiary countries under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA. The countries covered by this legislation are the 14 Least Developed Countries, LDCs, as defined by the United Nations and the U.S. State Department, which are not covered by any current U.S. trade preference program: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, Laos, Maldives, Nepal, Samoa, Solomon Islands, East Timor, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Yemen. Given the recent tsunami disaster, the bill includes a special emergency trade provision to assist Sri Lanka in its rebuilding efforts.

The beneficiary countries of this legislation are among the poorest countries in the world. Nepal has per capita income of \$240. Unemployment in Bangladesh stands at 40 percent. Approximately 36 percent of Cambodia's population lives below the poverty line. Each country faces critical challenges in the years ahead including poor health care, insufficient educational opportunities, high HIV/AIDS rates, and the effects of war and civil strife. The United States must take a leadership role in providing much-needed assistance to the people of these countries.

Consequently, Senator SMITH and I have worked closely together over the past few years to push for substantial increases in our foreign aid budget. We recognize that helping developing countries rise from poverty is not only a moral obligation, but a key component in our fight against terror. Yet humanitarian and development assistance should not be the sum total of our efforts to put these countries on the road to economic prosperity and political stability. Indeed, the key for sustained growth and rising standards of living will be the ability of each of these countries to create vital export industries to compete in a free and open global marketplace.

We should help these countries help themselves by opening the U.S. market to their exports. Success in that endeavor will ultimately allow these countries to become less dependent on foreign aid and allow the United States to provide assistance to countries in greater need.

The garment industry is a key part of the manufacturing sector in some of these countries. In Nepal, the garment industry is entirely export-oriented and accounts for 40 percent of the foreign exchange earnings. It employs over 100,000 workers—half of them women—and sustains the livelihood of over 350,000 people. The United States

is the largest market for Nepalese garments and accounts for 80 to 90 percent of Nepal's total exports every year. In Cambodia, approximately 250,000 Cambodians work in the garment industry supporting approximately 1 million dependents. The garment industry accounts for more than 90 percent of Cambodia's export earnings. In Bangladesh, the garment industry accounts for 75 percent of export earnings. The industry employs 1.8 million people, 90 percent of whom are women, and sustains the livelihoods of 10 to 15 million people.

Despite the poverty seen in these countries and the importance of the garment industry and the U.S. market, they face some of the highest U.S. tariffs in the world, averaging over 15 percent. In contrast, countries like Japan and our European partners face tariffs that are nearly zero. On top of this, there is increasing concern that the removal of quotas on textile and apparel articles on January 1, 2005, will severely harm their garment export industries in LDC countries as U.S. importers will shift their orders to China, India and other suppliers with cheaper labor markets.

Millions of jobs could be lost, threatening economic growth and political stability. In those countries without a viable garment industry—such as Afghanistan and East Timor—the removal of quotas will severely impact the opportunities to develop industries, employment, and expanded foreign investment.

Surely we can do better. This legislation will help these countries compete in the U.S. market and let their citizens know that Americans are committed to helping them realize a better future for themselves and their families. And the impact on U.S. jobs will be minimal. Currently, the beneficiary countries under this legislation account for only 4 percent of U.S. textile and apparel imports, compared to 24 percent for China, and 72 percent for the rest of the world. These countries will continue to be small players in the U.S. market, but the benefits of this legislation will have a major impact on their export economies.

At a time when U.S. standing is at an alltime low in some countries, we need legislation such as this to show the best of America and American values. It will provide a vital component to our development strategy and add another tool to the war on terror. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

TRIBUTE TO JOANNE BENSON

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to join me today in honoring the public life of a Minnesota leader in public affairs and public education, Joanne Benson. Some of us will recognize her as a former lieutenant Governor of Minnesota, or as a Minnesota State Senator. But she is known to hundreds of teachers and children as an educator of distinction, imagina-

tion, and courage. This month marks her retirement as the Chief Education Officer of the Minnesota Business Academy charter high school in our capital city of St. Paul.

Joanne Benson is considered by friends and colleagues to be one of the most conscientious and hardworking women in Minnesota—a considerable distinction. She was born in Le Sueur, an agricultural community, where she learned early the virtue of service to family and community. She and her husband, Robert, are the parents of two accomplished adult children, for whom education is both a cherished value and a professional calling. Her grandchildren are blessed to have the benefit of her loving example and guidance.

Minnesota's historic leadership in education proudly points to Joanne's degree from St. Cloud State University, and her eventual assistant professorship in the University's College of Education. From this service, she went on to become a Minnesota State senator from the St. Cloud region that she calls her home. Her work on behalf of education policy and community safety brought her to the attention of Gov. Arne Carlson, whom she served with distinction as lieutenant Governor from 1995 to 1999.

The State of Minnesota was to have yet greater service from Joanne, when at the end of the Carlson administration she became the president of the nascent Minnesota Business Academy, a business immersion charter high school in downtown St. Paul. MBA serves some of our State's most talented and challenged students. The school is the first in the Nation to be sponsored by a local Chamber of Commerce and is nationally noted for its Star Tracks initiative, teaching and certifying students in the personal traits and behaviors essential to success in the business workplace.

With the people of Minnesota, I ask this Chamber to join in celebrating the life and service of Joanne Benson, a woman of great humor and patience, intelligence and grace, as she takes a well-earned retirement from the profession of education.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CHARLES W. SEDGWICK

• Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, Mr. Charles W., Bill, Sedgwick is retiring after more than 40 years of celebrated service with the Food and Drug Administration. His career began on June 7, 1964, as an investigator for the Kansas City district. From beginning to end, Bill sharpened his skills through work performed in a variety of locations; Kansas City, Omaha, Washington DC, Dallas, and Cincinnati. His dream was fulfilled, with the help of countless mentors and friends, as he began as the Kansas City district director in June of 2000.